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The New Testament Teaching Concerning **THE HEREAFTER**



by **L. R. Wilson**

(Reading Time 3½ Minutes)

There is more bonafide evidence that Christ was raised from the dead than there is any other single fact in all history. Based upon this evidence, Paul argued that all men will be raised. Thus he asserted, "Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor. 15:12-15).

On one occasion some of the Sadducees, who argued that there is no resurrection or life after death, came to Jesus with a made-up story about seven brothers who married the same woman, then asked, "... in the resurrection, whose wife shall she be of the seven? . . . Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Mat. 22:25-32).

Jesus pointed out two errors in their reasoning:

1. In the resurrection there is no blood relationship — hence no marrying. In harmony therewith, Paul explained that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 15:50).

2. When Moses approached the burning bush, God said to him: "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exod. 3:6). This the Sadducees believed, but they had overlooked one fact. Namely, **"God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."** Then Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who had died centuries earlier, were still living somewhere, with God.

AFTER DEATH, WHAT?

1. After death there will be both a resurrection and a judgment. Furthermore, both the good and the bad will be raised in the same hour. This Jesus plainly declared, saying, "For the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (Jno. 5:28,29). Thus all will come forth at the same time; some to eternal life, the rest to everlasting condemnation.

2. There are but two places for all to go after the judgment. Jesus made this abundantly clear in the picture he gave of the last judgment, saying, "And these (the wicked) shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal" (Mat. 25:46). The Bible makes no mention of any other place or condition after death and the judgment.

HEAVEN AND HELL

1. There are many expressions found in the New Testament to indicate the joys of heaven. In Revelation 21 and 22 it is pictured as a city "four square," with golden streets, jasper walls, pearly gates, the river of life, with trees bearing their fruit perennially; where there is no heat, no tears, no sickness, and no sorrow. In that city the face of God is the light for ever more.

No doubt, all of these terms are highly figurative, but they indelibly impress one fact upon our finite minds, namely; heaven will be a wonderful place of happiness and unending enjoyment — where sorrows come no more.

Heaven is also pictured as a place of eternal rest (Heb. 3:11; Rev. 14:13).

It is doubtful, however, if finite minds can grasp all the marvels that God has in store for his children, who remain faithful to him until death.

2. The word "hell" is generally used to describe the place of everlasting punishment of the incorrigible wicked (Mat. 5:22,29,30; 10:28; 18:9). Sometimes hell is pictured as a place of fire (Rev. 20:10). Sometimes it is "outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Mat. 25:30). Sometimes it is spoken of as "the second death" — meaning eternal separation from God, the giver of all life. But however we look at it, the place of eternal death for the wicked, will be one of punishment, "in flaming fire" with "vengeance on all them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thes. 1:7,8). It does not matter how we look at these scriptures, hell **will** be a place of unending punishment.

CONCLUSION

It is an inescapable fact that "it is appointed unto men once to die, after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord," said Paul, "we persuade men." "For," he goes on, "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). There is no escape from the hereafter. It therefore behooves us all to trust in Christ who conquered death by his own resurrection, and to conform our lives unto his, that he may at last be able to say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Mat. 25:23).

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